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Yoga in Europe

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Introduction

Yoga is a notoriously difficult word to pin down. Historically, looking at its Sanskrit root, it means ‘union’ but in this sense it can be associated with the yoking of cows to a cart, mathematical conjunctions, or the compounding of medicine. Despite this collage of Sanskrit linguistic associations, most twenty-first century Europeans closely associate yoga with a practice of physical postures, breathing and meditation exercises for health and fitness, which may or may not also be associated with ‘spirituality.’ There is a rich range of historical associations with the word, which also has specific national and linguistic nuances in particular European contexts. When you enquire a bit more deeply about an individual’s understanding of yoga in the European context, each individual’s understanding is likely to be uniquely influenced through their particular biographical history (Newcombe 2018). Although ‘yoga’ retains consistency, it also shows huge and rapid transformations in associations and practices from the eighteenth century to the present.

This chapter will give an overview and outline to yoga in Europe as both an idea and a spectrum of related practices. However, the size of the subject of yoga, its cultural and linguistic complexity in the Indian subcontinent, coupled with the cultural and linguistic complexity of geographical Europe necessitates that this will be a partial and incomplete

presentation. This chapter is biased towards Anglophone literature and British history in particular, as this is the area in which the author is most familiar. Many of the national chapters contain important details on specific understandings and popularisations of yoga in Europe and this chapter should only be understood as a thematic supplement to particular local expressions.¹ It is hoped that this chapter will serve as a useful springboard for more nuanced research in future. It is clear that popular understanding of yoga has been transformed by its contacts with European culture and parts of European culture have likewise been deeply influenced by their contact with yoga traditions.

First Impressions of Yoga in Europe

Yoga was an *idea* in European cultures long before European bodies practiced anything called yoga. Indian philosophical ideas and ascetic practices were known to the ancient Greeks whose imperial influence stretched into what is now northwest India (c. 300 BCE). The ancient Romans also had established trade routes with much of the western coast of India. However, by the early modern period in Europe these relationships had been largely forgotten and few intellectuals had any concept of Indian philosophical or ascetic traditions. Some trade routes continued through the European Middle Ages, providing limited information about Indian religious practices, including yoga. For example, Marco Polo, originally writing in during the 1290s describes in his section on the 'Province of Lar Whence the Brahmans Come' a group of people called 'Chughi' who live to 150-200 years

¹ For an overview of yoga in Finland see (Rautaniemi 2015).

through regularly drinking a 'potion' of sulphur and mercury as well as 'lead[ing] the most ascetic life in the world, going stark naked; and these worship the Ox' (Polo in Yule 1920: 351-2). However such extant accounts are sparse and contemporary readers were probably very few.

During the European 'Age of Discovery' (c. fifteenth-eighteenth centuries) explorers 'rediscovered' the Indian sub-continent, primarily to import Indian goods into Europe. Entrepreneurs representing Portuguese, French, Dutch, Danish-Norwegian and British interests met with local rulers with a view to establishing exclusive trading arrangements; where possible local rulers in turn often attempted to play European traders off each other for their own best deal. Alongside these commercial explorers were missionaries who also published travelogues of the exotic cultures they were hoping to eventually save through conversion to Christianity. The accounts of these intercultural negotiations make fascinating reading of encountering edges of the known world. Yoga, as such, did not figure prominently as an interest to these commentators, but their accounts do, at times, attempt to catalogue strange beliefs and practices of the natives, often to justify pre-existing religious and cultural prejudices. Salaciously in 1681 John Freyer, a British doctor returned from travels in India and published an account described a variety of ascetics as well as 'Jougies' in such a way as to titillate and morally outrage his Christian audience:

There are a sort of Jougies, Priests fit for such a God, among the linguits [sic.] of this Country, who practise this daily; the Husbands entertain them courteously, wash

their Feet, and the whole Family is at his Beck, as long as he stays to do the Wife a Kindness.

Others slash themselves with sharp Knives, and suffer themselves to be hooked by the Muscles of the Back, and hang so some Hours upon a Vow.

Under the Banyan Tree, an Alter with a Dildo in the middle bine erected, they offer Rice and Cocoe-Nuts [sic] to the Devil, and joining some small Ladders together made of Osiers, do the like' when the Gomcar or Bayliff of the Town takes a filched Knife for Sacrifice in one Hand, and a Dungil-Cock in the other, and cutting off its Head, fixes it at top of the Ladder, and sprinkling the Blood they all dance, and beat Brass Pots with a great Shout saying, The Devil must be pacified with Blood, God with Prayers. (Fryer 1681: 102-3)

Such evocative accounts, tinted by Christian worldviews and moral fears, wetted European appetite for colonial expansion and missionary undertakings. Some of the first missionaries to India were French, and the Jesuits were particularly active in India in the early eighteenth century (Mohan 2017). During this period of travel-writing, any consideration of yoga was subservient to the need to show the pagan immorality and superiority of the Christian culture.

As British imperial interests increased, particularly in northern India, colonial officials had to interact with organised groups of ascetics. In this context, the term *yogi* could refer to any number of militarized ascetics or mercenaries, as well as to the well-organized and powerful Nāth organizations, the only self-identify group of 'yogis' with a continuous presence in India from the 12th or 13th centuries to today. Local Indian and Mughal rulers had a tradition of granting land to Nāth orders in exchange for esoteric

knowledge and military alliances. These Nāth alliances with princely states made it difficult for the British trade agents and colonial administrations to establish successful trade networks and governance structures; the Nāths had a reputation for both supernatural powers and military ability (Clark 2006 and Mallinson 2011).

Meanwhile propaganda provided by missionaries and travelers presented yogis as immoral street performers and vagabonds. During the nineteenth century, British colonial intervention in the social order of India removed these ascetic orders from royal patronage. Many ascetics were then forced to become the begging vagabonds described by colonial officials. During most of the colonial period, living yoga and yogis were largely regarded with contempt and suspicion (Pinch 2006 and White 2009).

Prioritising Sanskrit Literature

On the other hand, Europeans interacting with Indian culture had a growing awareness that there was an ancient and rich literary culture in the Indian subcontinent. Europeans (particularly German linguists and British bureaucrats), began to invest time in understanding the religions and cultures of the Indian subcontinent. These officials and scholars prioritized philosophical presentations of yoga and *sāṃkhya* from Sanskrit texts. The Calcutta-based Asiatic Society was founded in 1784 by thirty British citizens to better explore the India under British influence. The Asiatic Society soon began publishing translations of the Bhagavad Gītā (a section of the Mahābhārata) and selected Upaniṣads, which were well received by the educated public. Colonial officials hope to achieve a better

understanding of the culture of the people they were now responsible for governing. For philological and ideological reasons, German Indologists also became interested in the translation of Sanskrit texts (Adluri and Bagchee 2014). Many European Romantics were inspired by Indian texts in translation, creating what the French scholar Raymond Schwab (1950) termed an “Oriental Renaissance” (*la renaissance orientale*) an idealization and celebration of Indian spirituality in nineteenth century European intellectual circles. The brothers Friedrich and August Schlegel were both highly influential with the creation of both Indology and German Romanticism (Speight 2016). The Société Asiatique held its first meeting in Paris in 1822 and the Royal Asiatic Society in London opened its first meeting in 1824; both societies began studying and translating Indian scriptures.

In Britain, the poet Edwin Arnold’s English translation of the Bhagavad Gītā, *The Song Celestial* (1885) was extremely successful among the wider literary public. Although not as popular as Arnold’s biography of the Buddha *The Light of Asia* (1880), *The Song Celestial* portrayed a Christianised Krishna, who offers the warrior Arjuna salvation:

For who, none other Gods regarding, looks
Ever to Me, easily am I gained
By such a Yôgi; and, attaining Me,
They fall not—those Mahatmas—back to birth,
To life, which is the place of pain, which ends,
But take the way of utmost blessedness. (Arnold 1885, VIII, 60)

Through translations of the Bhagavad Gītā, yoga became an acceptable interest for intellectual study and explorations in comparative religions and mysticism. The Bhagavad

Gītā offers many different paths to knowing God (in the form of Kṛṣṇa) and living in accordance with dharma. The three definitions of yoga found in the Gītā became known in Europe: (1) “karma yoga,” or the idea of union with the absolute through action without attachment to the results; (2) “bhakti yoga,” or unceasing loving remembrance of God, and (3) “jñāna yoga,” or a direct perception of the ultimate nature of reality through wisdom and insight. Readings of the Bhagavad Gītā have been subject to extensive interpretation and innovation, but its place as a central text of the contemporary yoga revival rests on a foundation of its translations amongst the European literate elite in the nineteenth century.

The mutual cultural exchange created complex cross-currents: The Bhagavad Gītā’s three definitions of yoga were also taken up by religious and political reformers within India; it was in London that Mahatma Gandhi first encountered the Bhagavad Gītā while a law student in 1888 (Beckerlegge 2000: 144). Conversely, the founder of the British Wheel of Yoga, Wilfred Clark was introduced to yoga by Indian soldiers he was serving alongside during in World War I as he listened to the Indian soldiers recounting the Gītā to inspire fortitude in the face of battle (Newcombe forthcoming). Such entanglements of globalisation make clear lines of influence difficult to unravel. One could argue that the missionary efforts of Swami Prabupada and ISKCON in the twentieth century fell on fertile ground due to this latent cultural familiarity with the bhakti yoga of the Gītā. Despite the fact that reference to Patañjali’s Yogaśāstra (the sūtras and their commentary) has become

de rigueur for contemporary yoga practitioners of yoga (Singleton 2008), the Gītā has perhaps been the most frequently read text by those involved in the contemporary yoga revival during the twentieth century.

Early translations of Patañjali's Yogaśāstra came into Europe with the Theosophical Society in the late nineteenth century. Patañjali's text, usually dated to between 300-500 CE, outlines eight parts of a practice of aṣṭāṅgayoga (eight-limbed yoga) which has the goal of experiencing a complete cessation of the fluctuations of the mind and a realization of the ultimate nature of reality (Maas 2013). Patañjali's definition of yoga is often given by contemporary European practitioners of yoga to describe the nature and goal of their practice (Singleton 2008; White 2014). However, European understandings of yoga often are more directly influenced by Theosophical and later twentieth-century interpretations of the Yogaśāstra (White 2014). Generally speaking, Theosophists rejected asanas as part of 'hatha yoga' a dangerous, physical system that was unsuited to modern European bodies. In contrast, 'raja yoga' was framed as an esoteric practice 'operating on the spiritual level, achieving the practitioner's ascent through asceticism, meditation, and spiritual exercises' (Strube forthcoming).

Theosophical Society as a Platform for Yoga in Europe

The Theosophical Society not only reinterpreted Indian religions, but it also served as a platform for which specific Indian individuals promoted versions of yoga to the European public. The Society distributed translations of Indian religious texts as well as

their own publications worldwide through networks of booksellers and public reading rooms. Local Theosophical branches appeared throughout Europe and offered lectures and periodicals as well as public reading rooms, where like-minded seekers could network, explore and consider various forms on 'alternative' beliefs and practices.

During the early twentieth century, many people came into contact through yoga through the books of Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). As Elizabeth de Michelis (2004) has astutely observed, it was in a Theosophical-soaked environment that Vivekananda wrote *Raja Yoga* (1896) and invited Americans and Europeans to identify with Indian religiosity and yoga in particular. Vivekananda, having travelled around India as a *sannyasin* (ascetic), observed the poverty of the Indian people and resolved to travel to the United States to raise money to improve conditions in his home country.

After attending the World Parliament of Religions to be held in Chicago in 1893 Vivekananda arrived in Europe through the sponsorship of wealthy Americans in August 1895. Silva Ceccomori begins her narrative of *Cent Ans de Yoga en France* (2001) with Vivekananda's arrival in Paris. Vivekananda came first to Paris and then London, in late 1895. It was largely through pre-existing Theosophical networks that he found audiences for his public talks. The 'raja yoga' Vivekananda championed was far removed from the physical practices of India's 'yogis' who still carried negative connotations in European minds. Vivekananda's yoga focused on an esoteric subtle body, exercises of breathing and meditation ultimately culminating in an experience of union with God. As David Gordon

White argues, Vivekananda's knowledge of yoga, as evidenced in *Raja Yoga* (1896) shows more influence from the *Kurma Purana* and his own personal background than a reading of Patañjali's *Yogaśāstra* (White 2014: 116-142).

At about the same time Professor Max Müller (1823-1900), a well-respected Indologist and Philologist, published works highlighting Vivekananda's guru Ramakrishna (1836-1886) as a 'Real Mahatma' (1896), followed by an authoritative *Ramakrishna His Life and Sayings* (1898) (see Werner 1977: 156). Müller's elevation of Ramakrishna was in contrast to allegations of fraud which were becoming associated with the Theosophical Society during the 1890s, who had claimed to be guided by Mahatmas (great souls) in the etheric realms. In asserting that Vivekananda's guru Ramakrishna was a genuine 'great soul', Müller established an idealisation and authentication of Indian 'God men' or 'avatars' in European imagination independent of Theosophical milieus. Müller was born in a Germanic Duchy and educated at Leipzig but is best known for being Professor of Comparative Philology at the University of Oxford; his strongest scholarly legacy was the editing a 50-volume book series of *Sacred Books of the East* with Oxford University Press, beginning with his own translations of selected Upanishads in 1879.

Hari Prasad Shastri (1882-1956), born in Bareilly in north India, also used Theosophical connections establish his own following for teaching Advaita Vedānta in Britain. Shastri arrived in London in 1929 and initially was engaged to lecture at the Theosophical Society's meeting in Holborn (central London) for a period of a few months.

This association lasted long enough for a nucleus of interested students to become established. Shastri's teaching had a particular appeal to the well-educated British middle classes; well-educated women of independent means were particularly catalytic supporters of both groups. During the 1930s, the Shanti Sadan occasionally took out advertisements in *The Times* for lectures in 'Yoga or Spiritual Training' or 'Eastern Philosophy and Mysticism.' In 1948, Shastri was suggested as a potential author for Penguin's first paperback book on yoga. The decision was eventually taken to engage Ernest Wood, a British-born former Theosophist, was chosen as the author for this title. Nevertheless, Shastri found another publisher for his volume and his volume *Yoga* circulated widely in the 1960s and 70s and is maintained in print by the Shanti Sadan (Newcombe forthcoming).

During the 1920s and 30s, a variety of other alternative religiosities were associated with yoga in Europe which have been under-researched. These include the legacy of Inayat Khan (1882-1927) who's articulation of Sufism in Europe was influential amongst spiritual seekers who overlapped with interests in yoga. Khan came to Europe from India via the United States, where he met and married Ora Ray Baker, a cousin of the founder of Christian Science and half-brother to Pierre Bernard taught yoga in New York during this period (Urban 2001 and Love 2010). After founding the Sufi Order in the West in London (1914), Khan relocated to France, and left important legacies there as well as in The Netherlands, Germany and Britain. Likewise, the 'Fourth Way' teachings of the Armenian-born George Gurdjieff (d. 1949) incorporated many teachings based on yoga in his own,

apparently more expedient path towards individual liberation. Gurdjieff was based for most of his life in France and his former student, the Russian-born P. D. Ouspensky (1878-1947) was popularised his understandings of Gurdjieff's teachings in Britain from 1924 until his own death. The Mazdanan teachings of the USA-based (possibly European-born) Ottoman Zar-Adusht Ha'nish (d. 1936) enjoyed a vogue in the seeker milieus of European metropolises in the 1920s. Ha'nish combined ideas based on Zoroastrianism with physical culture and breathing exercises as well as enthusiastically promoting vegetarianism; all of these activities and ideas were closely associated with yoga in this period and beyond.

Jiddhu Krishnamurti

One of the most influential Theosophical legacies on understandings of yoga in Europe came in the form of Jiddhu Krishnamurti (1895–1986). Krishnamurti had been identified as the prophesised messiah for the Theosophical Society in 1909 when he was a child in Madras. He was adopted by the English suffragette and reproductive health campaigner Annie Besant (1847–1933), who was at that time president of the Theosophical Society. Krishnamurti was taken to England for his education and The Order of the Star of the East was founded in anticipation of his mature teachings. Somewhat ironically, in attempting to throw off the expectations of his mentors and refuse to be a 'World Teacher', he established himself as one. In the 1929 speech in which he dissolved The Order of the Star of the East. At what had become an annual gathering of several thousands of people at

Ommen, The Netherlands, Krishnamurti concisely articulated the teachings for which he would become famous and repeat in variations throughout the twentieth century:

Man cannot come to it [truth] through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophical knowledge or psychological technique. He has to find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the contents of his own mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection.

(Krishnamurti 1929)

From the late 1920s, Krishnamurti lived mainly in southern California although he made frequent trips to Europe where he gave public talks throughout his life. In California, Krishnamurti became friends with British ex-patriot Aldous Huxley (1894–1963); Krishnamurti's first book *The First and Last Freedom* (1954) was published with an introduction from Huxley.



Figure 1: Annie Besant (centre) arrives in Charing Cross Station, London with Jiddu Krishnamurti on her right and his younger brother Nityananda on her left in May 1911.

Krishnamurti became an integral part of the formation of understandings of yoga in twentieth century Europe. His teachings were not directly connected to the growing popularity of asana-focused ‘modern yoga.’ However, he was very much associated with the same milieu and his ideas and various practices were often combined by individuals in their explorations of yoga. A frequent visitor to Europe before the Second World War, Krishnamurti again lectured in Europe annually from 1961. Mutual connections led to Krishnamurti being taught yoga asana by B.K.S. Iyengar in Gstaad, Switzerland in the early 1960s. Through Iyengar’s introduction, Krishnamurti visited the family of T. Krishnamacharya in Madras in 1965 and became a long-term student of Krishnamacharya’s son T.K.V. Desikachar (1938–2016) for asana and pranayama. During the late 1960s,

Krishnamurti was also closely associated with the Belgian Gérard Blitz, who had founded vacation company Club Méditerranée (1950) and in 1973 was pivotal in establishing The European Union of Yoga (l'Union Européenne de Yoga) based in Zinal, Switzerland. Krishnamurti's ideas appealed to a wide variety of Europeans as well as a global audience. Indeed, Krishnamurti had frequent dialogues with a number of very influential public figures and his books remain in print today (Desponds 2007).

Krishnamurti promoted constant awareness, peace and stillness, but also 'an awareness of self-deception, prejudice and parroted dogmas which can blind us to the wholeness of reality and the oneness of humanity' (Zohar 1980). Krishnamurti's message was essentially very simple although he phrased it in many different ways – peace, happiness and an improvement of the human condition were to be found through self-exploration, a tranquil mind and the cultivation of love. From the 1970s onwards, Krishnamurti held annual 'camps' at Brockwood Park, a property purchased on his behalf in Britain.

Swami Sivananda and Mircea Eliade

Swami Sivananda has been one of the most influential promoters of yoga in Europe, particularly in German speaking areas. The young Mircea Eliade (1907– 1986), the influential Romanian scholar of comparative religions and yoga, studied with Sivananda during the early 1930s. Eliade's doctorate (awarded in 1933) was based partially on a period of six months he spent studying with Sivananda. First published as *Yoga. Essai sur les origines*

de la mystique indienne (1934), Eliade's work on yoga was eventually reworked into the monograph *Le yoga : immortalité et liberté* (1954)/*Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (1958), both which had a wide circulation in the mid-twentieth century. In the estimation of Sarah Strauss, Eliade as well as Sivananda were important key figures in the creation of an 'imagined community' of yoga practitioners. The British historian Benedict Anderson described the significance of the print media in creating imagined national communities which allowed for the growth of European nationalism in the nineteenth century. Likewise, Strauss pervasively argues that 'Eliade, just as much as his mentor Sivananda and his mentor's own inspiration Vivekananda – contributed to the production of an "imagined community" ... a global community of people who, though rarely acquainted in the face-to-face sense, nevertheless feel themselves connected through their shared interest in and practice of yoga' (Strauss 2005:41). The majority of European yoga practitioners in the early twentieth century were connected through books, pamphlets and letters from various yoga teachers to a global imagined community of yoga.

Swami Sivananda was one of the most prolific and influential in his early twentieth-century correspondence. By 1936 Sivananda had enough followers to establish the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh as a more formal organisation, which printed books and pamphlets propagating the society and its guru. Not only did Sivananda correspond with interested parties, he also sent his pamphlets and books to major libraries in Europe and the United States. Berlin-based Boris Sacharow (1899 -1959) and the Riga-based Harry Dickman (see

Latvian Chapter in this volume) were both postal disciples of Swami Sivananda and acknowledged by Sivananda for their services for the translation of Sivananda's texts as early as 1936 (McConnell 2016: 5). The Ukrainian-born Sacharow was teaching yoga in Berlin from at least 1937-1943; resuming after the war in the German Democratic Republic cities of Bayreuth and Nürnberg again with the title of 'The First German Yoga School' (Ersten Deutschen Yogaschule (EDY)), although Fuchs (1990) documents a number of other yoga activities before Sachrow's 'school' can be verified. Sachrow was awarded the title of 'Yoga Raj' by Swami Sivananda through correspondence in 1947 (Fuchs 1990: 83-85 and 93-95). One of the main practices taught out of Sachrow's school was the 'Rishikesh Reihe' or 'Rishikesh Sequence' which had a wide circulation in Europe in the post-war period (Strauss 2005: 42). This sequence of postures (asana) starts with sun salutations, and includes some inversions, forward bends and back bends before ending in breathing exercises and pranayama. The 'Rishikesh sequence' was also found in the very wide-circulating book *J'apprends le yoga* (1968)/*Yoga Self Taught* (1971) by the Belgian André van Lysebeth (1919-2004).

Several other of Sivananda's Indian disciples became very influential in defining the experience of global and European understandings of yoga. Of particular global influence was Swami Vishnudevananda (1927-1993) who was 'sent' by Sivananda to popularise yoga in the West and was considered a specialist in yoga asana. From 1959, Vishnudevananda made his home in Quebec and published an early illustrated guide to *Yoga Asana* (1959). His

associates opened many Sivananda Vedanta Centres in Europe and North America in the years following his move to Canada. Other disciplines of Sivananda who later became gurus in their own right, such as Swami Satyananda (1923-2009) of the Bihar School of Yoga gained influence in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In addition to Swami Sivananda, Harry Dickman corresponded with many different Indian gurus in his search for yogic enlightenment and was also strongly influenced by Paramhansa Yogananda, Swami Vishnu Tirth, Swami Shivananda Saraswati of Asam as well as the Ramana Maharshi, and other teachers (McConnell 2016: 5). Other important literature in this milieu included the works of ‘Yogi Ramacharaka’ (Fuchs 1990: 61-62 and Newcombe forthcoming). Yogi Ramacharaka was one of several pseudonyms used by the American William Walker Atkinson (1862-1932), a prolific writer closely associated with ‘New Psychology’ ‘The Arcane Teaching’ and the New Thought movement (Deslippe 2011). And equally significant for mid-twentieth century yoga enthusiasts was Paul Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India* (1934), detailing Brunton’s personally transformative meetings with mystics and holy men of India, culminating with Brunton’s encounter with Ramana Maharshi (1879– 1950). Brunton is widely credited with bringing the Maharshi to the attention of spiritual seekers worldwide. However, Brunton’s ultimate conclusion is that the “true guru” is the “inner guide” or “higher self.” Brunton, as well as many others, began his spiritual searching in the esoteric and theosophical milieus of 1920s London (Newcombe forthcoming).

Physical Culture Movement and Yoga

From the mid-19th century, European populations began to be concerned about the physical weakness of populations in newly urbanized, industrialized cities. During the *fin de siècle*, narratives of Social Darwinism and eugenics became intertwined with calls for nationalism and military readiness. Compulsory schooling was a perfect venue for improving children's minds and bodies; Prussian and Germanic states introduced compulsory education for children in the late eighteenth century, with Scandinavia, Estonia and Latvia following soon thereafter; England and France did not introduce compulsory schooling until the late nineteenth century. The revival of the Olympic Games in 1896 marked a turning point for European sports with a revival of Grecian ideals of physicality being an important part of the development of a rounded human.

In the late nineteenth century, eugenic narratives of European origin began to permeate Indian culture from both colonial powers and the Indian revolutionaries. Indian nationalists began to call for the revitalization of the Indian body, through specifically Indian cultural traditions (Singleton 2007a). The site of much of this 19th-century physical training was the *akhārā* (gymnasium). Here, the practice of yoga-*āsana* began to slip into the repertoire of Indic physical culture, which also included Indian martial arts, wrestling, warm-up exercises (*dands*), *sūrya namaskāra*, weight lifting of Indian clubs, *mallakhamba* (exercises on a pillar), and various drills. Mark Singleton (2010) has documented how these

physical culture movements filtered back to India and influenced the shape of yoga *āsana* practice.

This type of yoga as physical culture soon found its way into Europe via the pages of various physical culture journals. In Britain these included *Health & Strength* amongst others, which contained a variety of features on yoga as well as advertisements for mail-order courses on yoga. Indian physical culturists like K.V. Iyer and Ramesh Balsekar, both of whom also had associations with yoga, regularly featured in photographs in *Health & Strength* in the interwar period, putting Indian physical culturalists on equal footing with icons like Prussian-born Eugen Sandow (1867– 1925) who popularized bodybuilding on global tours and the *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture* from 1898 (Singleton 2010: 122-29 and Goldberg 2016: 142-152). Sandow relocated to London in 1906 thanks to the generosity of a wealthy Indian-born Parsi who attributed his return health to Sandow's physical culture regime. Courses on 'yoga' and the development of psychic control could be found in the advertisement sections of physical culture journals from the interwar period into the 1950s (Newcombe forthcoming).

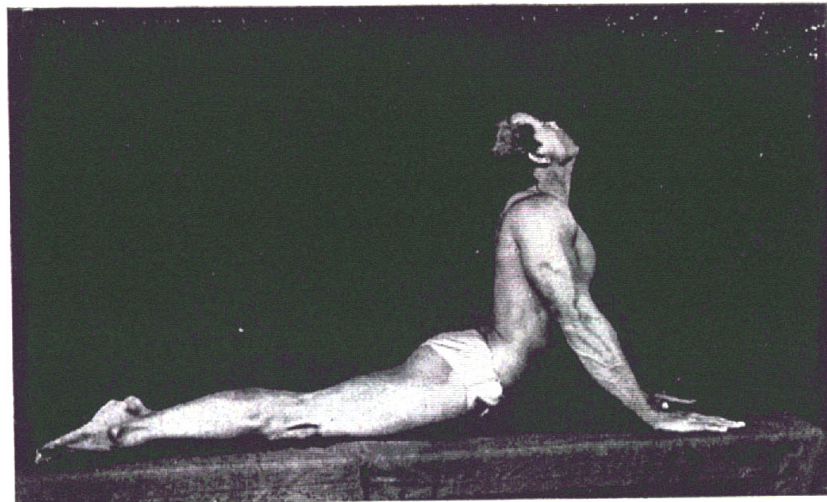


FIG. 13

LESSON 3

Figure 2: Image of K. V. Iyer, the Indian Physical Culturist based in Mysore performing an exercise which would look familiar to practitioners of yoga in the second half of the twentieth century c. 1940.

Meanwhile the practice of sun salutation exercises (*surya namaskar*) was first promoted in Europe in 1936 when Bhavanarao Pant Pratinidhi (1869-1951), the Raja of Aundh, travelled to London. Bhawanarao Pant had a long-established interest in physical culture and promoted *surya namaskars*, as well as yoga asanas, gymnastics, wrestling and other sports in the compulsory and free schools in Aundh which he established in 1923. In 1928, he published *Surya Namaskars* (Pratinidhi 1928), a step-by-step guide to the exercises in English. the American-born journalist Louise Morgan wrote a series of articles promoting *surya namaskars* as a rejuvenation practice particularly suited to women. In the summer of 1936 the British newspaper, the News Chronical ran a four-part series of articles providing a step-by-step guide to performing *surya namaskar* under the headline: *Surya Namaskars – The Secret of Health: Mothers Look Younger Than Daughters – Rajah’s Way to Banish Age and Illness.* At this point this sequence of exercises was not closely associated with yoga

postures (asana), but they two quickly became associated in the physical culture milieu to the point that by the time Bhavanarao Pant's son Apa Pant was the Indian High Commissioner to Britain in the early 1970s, *surya namaskar* was assumed to be an integral part of yoga practice by many Europeans. Morgan's 1930s articles and re-writes of Pant's book as the *Ten Point Way To Health* (1938) helped integrate some of the Indian physical culture exercises into physical conditioning activities which were considered acceptable for European women (Goldberg 2016: 180-207).

In late nineteenth century Europe, middle class girls might have been taught Henrick Ling's Swedish gymnastics at school while boys were more frequently taught military drills and competitive games. Ling and his students designed movements to exercise all aspects of the muscular-skeletal system of the body. Employment as an instructor of Swedish Gymnastics was a professional career available for women in Britain from the late nineteenth century onwards. Swedish Gymnastics also offered 'remedial exercises' that could correct postural defects that might cause further ill health. A further attraction was that Swedish Gymnastics or 'Drill' required no equipment and could be used to promote public health for schoolchildren. During the later twentieth century, teaching yoga became a socially acceptable women's profession partially due to this precedent (Newcombe 2007). Singleton (2010) has also argued that the global popularity of these exercises for health likely influenced the development of posture-oriented yoga in the modern period. These styles of physical culture influenced the reception of yoga in Europe

and the popularity of physical-cultural influenced yoga amongst middle-class women and in adult education venues.

During the 1950s, 'Keep Fit' and 'Medau Rhythmic Movement,' both of which had been influenced by Ling's system, were attended by large groups of European middle-class women. Medau Rhythmic Movement was developed by the German national Hinrich Medau (1890-1974) who had a background in gymnastics and sport and worked with modern dancers Bode and Dalcroze on rhythmic movement. Medau was a popular form of exercise with women and incorporated a variety of aids into its strength and stamina routines, such as Indian wooden clubs. Some of the female physical culture movements in the mid-twentieth century directly incorporated yoga postures (asana) into its routines, such as the British citizen Mary Bagot Stack's Women's League of Health and Beauty from the 1930s onwards. In her autobiography, Mary Bagot Stack claimed that some of her exercises were based on yoga postures learned while living in India with her husband in 1912. Bagot Stack's group movements, often done to classical music, were designed to create health and beauty from the 'inside out.' These exercise movements made yoga-as-exercise a more natural cultural fit in adult education venues in Europe in the post-war period (Newcombe 2007 and Singleton 2010: 150-2).

Selvarajan Yesudian and Elisabeth Haich can be seen as a significant bridge between the early twentieth century world of esoteric Theosophical-inspired yoga and the more physical-culture oriented yoga of the second half of the twentieth century. Elizabeth Haich

(born Haich Erzsébet (1897-1994)) grew up in Budapest, in a well-off household with Theosophical connections. She was deeply interested in art and culture and her autobiography details her spiritual experiences and past-life memories (Haich 1953). Around 1940, she met Selvarajan Yesudian who had travelled from his birthplace of Madras to Budapest in 1937 with the hope of training as a biomedical doctor. When a friend showed her photographs of Yesudian doing yoga asana, Haich wrote in her autobiographical *Initiations* that she immediately felt she recognized him from a past life as a priestess in ancient Egyptian esoteric mysteries (Haich 1953: 525).

Although Yesudian's Indian parents had been doctors in colonial Madras, his autobiographical accounts tell of being a sickly child who recovered his health through yogic-asana exercises. After he arrived in Hungary, Yesudian was put in touch with Haich through a mutual friend; at this point Haich was offering weekly lectures in yoga but did no physical exercises. In contrast Yesudian had training in physical-culture based 'yogic' exercises but was not skilled in articulating the framework in which Europeans understood yoga. Together they opened a yoga school in Budapest which operated from 1941. Yesudian and Haich taught a mix of Indian physical-culture style yoga exercises and Theosophically-influenced yoga philosophy.

After the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1948, the pair fled to Switzerland and found refuge in Zürich. They continued their yoga school in Zürich, as well as teaching in various other locations throughout Switzerland and were of particular influence in

German-speaking Europe throughout the twentieth century (Fuchs 1990: 85-87 and 95-99).

Their co-written book was published in Hungarian as *Sport és Jóga* (1941), in German as *Sport und Yoga* (1949) and in English as *Yoga and Health* (1953) were commercial successes and encouraged many to consider yoga asana as an important part of the study of yoga.

Yoga in Adult Education

In some European countries, adult education classes were an important venue for the popularisation and normalisation of postural yoga in Europe after World War II. In this context, yoga was expected to largely be secular and promoting health and well-being in a non-competitive culture. These venues for yoga popularisation were particularly influential in Germany, Britain and Bulgaria amongst other countries.

In Britain, yoga as physical culture came from two main sources in the early 1960s, a highlight popular teacher of Indian origin who called herself 'Yogini Sunita' as well as the teaching of B.K.S. Iyengar (1918-2015). In 1965, Sunita was based in Birmingham where city officials undertook an 'official enquiry' into yoga concerning the 'hundreds' of students taking yoga classes under the city's further education programmes at the Birmingham Athletics Institute. The Birmingham city council was convinced that Sunita's methods were beneficial and appropriate for being taught at the Athletics Institute but could not resolve the question of how to know if a yoga teacher was 'properly qualified' for such activity. Sunita taught inversions as well as a series of flowing physical movements which included inversions quite a lot of 'half padmasana' (postures where the foot is brought to rest in the

groin of the opposite leg). However, her signature teaching was called the 'slipped second' and focused on being completely mentally relaxed for only one second, which she asserted was the equivalent to eight hours of 'perfect sleep.' Sunita taught that religion was private, while her techniques of relaxation were appropriate subjects for public instruction. Interviews with Sunita suggest that she avoided the subject of religion in public forums and thus separated her relaxation techniques from religious questions in the mind of her students (Newcombe 2014).

In London, popular request led to an experimental class at the Clapton Adult Education Institute in the spring of 1967. From the opening of this class, Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) officials had the opinion that 'Instructional classes in Hatha Yoga need not and should not involve treatment of the philosophy of Yoga. They can be justified only as a form of "Keep Fit" or physical training' and were concerned that 'Yoga can lend itself to forms of exhibitionism which can hardly be called education'. This led to a secularization of yoga within the physical education context of adult education in Britain. After undertaking a search to find rigorous standards for the publicly-funded classes, ILEA officials eventually decided that 'gurus approved by' 'B.K.S. Iyengar could teach publicly subsidized classes in inner London, 'provided that instruction is confined to 'asanas' and 'pranayamas' (postures and breathing disciplines) and does not extend to the philosophy of Yoga as a whole.' However, B.K.S. Iyengar, argued that he could teach the ethical and spiritual principles of yoga without resorting to 'religious' language. It was in this context

that some of the first teacher training programs and yoga teaching certificates began to be developed.



Figure 3: A 1970s yoga class taught by students of B.K.S. Iyengar in a school gym in London. Photograph courtesy of the Iyengar Yoga Association (UK), Diana Clifton Collection.

As mentioned previously, Iyengar had been teaching annually in London and Gstaad, Switzerland from the early 1960s onwards as the guest of the violin virtuoso Yehudi Menuhin. A US-born child prodigy, Menuhin began taking yoga lessons with Iyengar in 1952 while stopping on a tour of India to stay with Prime Minister Nehru. Menuhin had a home in London and attended a music festival in Gstaad annually. Through the 1960s and

70s, Menuhin sponsored Iyengar for annual visits to Europe for his own private tuition and gave Iyengar a chance to expand his teaching base internationally. In the early 1960s, only a handful of students associated with the Asian Music Circle attended Iyengar's London classes. Within a few years, Menuhin's sphere of connections and put Iyengar on the BBC television, secured a book contract for *Light on Yoga* (1966) and finally, the approval of the physical education authorities in the Inner London Educational Authority. By the 1970s, Iyengar's public demonstrations and ILEA classes were selling out venues and he began to regularly tour other European countries (Newcombe 2014).

But not all of those promoting yoga as adult education agreed with a focus on physical culture in this context. Wilfred Clark, founder of the British Wheel of Yoga in the 1960s, lobbied strongly for yoga to be presented as philosophy, relaxation, meditation and only a small portion of class time given over to postures. Wilfred Clark systematically built up a network of people interested in yoga across Britain. Using his experience with local newspapers, he sent letters to local papers throughout the country asking for individuals interested in yoga to write to him. He would file the letters geographically, usually also posting back a personal type-written reply. When Wilfred collected a few names and addresses in a vicinity, he chose one correspondent and suggested that they organise group meetings. Some groups met to practice yoga in church or school halls (the room rental was often organised by the local educational authority) while others met in private homes. Wilfred Clark also encouraged regular correspondence and questions from yoga students to

whom he offered advice based on personal experience. This network eventually formed the British Wheel of Yoga and began offering yoga teacher training certificates to satisfy the demands of local authorities needing some sort of certification for yoga teachers. The British Wheel of Yoga networked with the European Union of Yoga which met annually in Switzerland from 1971 onwards (Newcombe forthcoming).

Yoga and Medicine

Prior to the early twentieth century European models of health and wellness might be better understood as being characterized by several competing models of treating illness and promoting health; the 'biomedical model' did not have a 'golden age' of conceptual dominance until the middle of the twentieth century. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, European medicine had several competing models which included biomedical practitioners, as well as herbalists, homoeopaths, anthroposophists and naturopaths, as well as those who subscribed to the power of mesmerism and positive thinking (New Thought) amongst others (Saks 2003: 68-71 and Singleton 2007b). Yogic techniques were of interest to a variety of practitioners in the European field of health and healing (and conversely Indian popularizers of yoga were receptive to European ideas of health and healing as well (see Alter 2004 and Newcombe 2017). In this context, some of the initial European interest in yoga came from Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) and those interested in his theories.

Mesmer theorised an all-pervasive, universal, fluid-like energy that could explain physical forces in the natural world as well as physiological experiences. Mesmer's techniques were controversial amongst the European public, particularly when applied as a form of parlour tricks (Winter 1998). However, Mesmer's theories and ideas about 'magnetism', will and the potential to inspire spontaneous healing, were of interest to many physicians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their theories formed a framework for much of the European understandings of yogic powers (Baier 2009 and 2012). Specifically, a correlation between the Indian concept of *prāṇa* and Mesmerist 'magnetism' was postulated by Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) in a Latin translation of the *Oupnek'hat* (1801–1802), an early rendering of the Upanishads in Persian. Nineteenth century German Mesmerist doctors were among the first to interpret chakras as nervous plexuses and postulate physiological corollaries for meditational experiences (Strube forthcoming). There was quite a lot of overlap between Mesmer and his contemporaries with European esoteric traditions as described in Julian Strube's chapter in this volume.

Another nineteenth century European preoccupation or association with yoga was a concern with the possibility of acquiring super-normal powers associated with yogis (*siddhi*) and their medical potential. The 1837 public burial of Hari Das at the court of Runjeet Sing in Lahore achieved significant popular and medical attention. According to eyewitness reports by European doctors and military personal, Hari Das was buried alive

and survived without food or drink for 40 days, before being revived by his attendants. This feat was done under relatively strict conditions in a public area. The witnesses record Hari Das practicing *vastra dhauti* (swallowing then removing a length of cotton cloth from the stomach) prior to burial. During his revival after 40 days, it appears that the ‘yogi’ was also using the technique of *khecari mudra* (flipping back the tongue into the nasal cavity). The story of Hari Das was noted by the British physician William Braid who sent out a number of calls for further information to medical journals on related phenomena. Quite a lot of information came back about demonstrations of ‘fakeers’ in India, and Braid went on to develop a theory of hypnotism as the working mechanism behind mesmeric trances. Throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century there continued to be an interest in analgesic and potentially life-extending effects of yogic techniques.

After the Second World War, European medicine was able to apply penicillin to the general population which transformed the health outcomes for many known bacterial illnesses. Yet Yoga was still promoted as a cure for the stresses and strains of modernity. For example, Desmond Dunne (based in Britain) ran a postal school of Yogism from the late 1940s and helped make a secular yoga form of yoga more acceptable in the initial post-war period. He argued that afflictions of European ‘civilized life’ created a ‘lack of energy, frustration, [and] the sense of purposelessness.’ These problems could be remedied, according to Dunne, through his system of ‘Yogism’ which was uniquely adapted for the needs of ‘Western’ man (Dunne 1951). His method focused on relaxation as well as

abdominal contraction techniques (*navli*), naturopathy, dietary changes, moral advice and positive thinking (Singleton 2007b). Dunne also had a keen interest in hypnosis, publishing *A Manual of Hypnotism* in 1959. Dunne taught primarily by correspondence course from an address in England but also gave addresses for overseas branches in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway and the USA. Another influential and under-researched author who re-presented yoga as suitable for the stresses and strains of modern Europeans was Felix Guyot (the French-born Constant Kerneiz (1880-1960)) who published many books on yoga in French, which were also translated into English and German during the 1930-1950s (Ceccomori 2001: 136-146 and Fuchs 1990: 87-88). During the 1920s and 30s, ideas about yoga found in translation also came to the attention of psychiatrists such as the Swiss Carl Jung and the Italian Roberto Assagioli, who were theorizing more positive models of human development.

Naturopathy was shaped by the work of Austrian Vincenz Priessnitz (1799-1851) who appealed to healthy surroundings, good quality of air, reasonable exercise and cleanliness for improving illness. His at his sanatorium at Gräfenberg (i.e. Lázně Jeseník in the Czech Republic) and hydrotherapy techniques achieved widespread popularity throughout Europe. The way Priessnitz's ideas were taken up by the German Louis Kuhn (1835-1901) became particularly influential in India. Kuhn's articulation of illness as an accumulation of waste and illness in the system (1891) was translated from the German into Hindi, Telugu and Urdu in the early twentieth century (Alter 2000). These theories resonated with

indigenous Indian theories of health such as Ayurveda. At the same time within India, an emphasis on yoga as a form of physical culture was extremely influential and yoga and naturopathy became more closely associated.

Meanwhile in Europe, public confidence in biomedicine was again being challenged from the 1960s onwards from political, feminist ideology as well as there being a greater awareness of the side-effects of some biomedical prescriptions. Yoga became of interest to many of those who were exploring 'alternatives' to biomedicine for promoting health and wellness. Criticisms of biomedicine included conceptual attacks of how biomedical assumptions dehumanized the patient, the failure to cure chronic illnesses and the continued prevalence of major illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Yoga was of particular interest to European middle-class who were increasingly vocalizing their dissatisfactions and feelings of dis-empowerment with 'medicalisation' of childbirth; yoga and idealizations of Indian maternity practices were incorporated into a growing 'natural childbirth movement' (Newcombe 2007).

A new narrative between biomedicine and other 'mind-body' interventions also began to be articulated with transpersonal psychology in the 1960s and 70s. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was popularizing his form of Transcendental Meditation as a 'scientific' panacea for a huge variety of the physical and mental symptoms experienced by Europeans. Particularly influential in this context was Harvard physician Herbert Benson's seminal work *The Relaxation Response* (1975) which showed how generic meditation and

relaxation techniques could yield similar efficacy claims that had been previously made specifically for the techniques taught by the Transcendental Meditation organization (Forem 1974; Maharishi 1968). Networks of intercultural exchange facilitated a World Conference on Scientific Yoga in New Delhi in December 1970, partially organized by British citizen Christopher Hills. Hills was also associated with an influential human potential and counter-cultural hub in London as well as having cultivated personal connections with the Nehru family and the revolutionary-turned-spiritual leader Aurobindo who had taken refuge before independence in French Pondicherry. Participants at the 1970 conference included many prominent Indian popularizers of yoga as well as ‘westerners’ interested in alternative medicine and human potential psychology such as the Czech psychiatrist, Stanislav Grof and the Canadian psychologist Sidney Jourard. More recently the academic discipline of positive psychology has taken up this tradition of interest in yogic techniques in promoting human wellbeing and ‘flourishing’ (Itzivan 2014).

From the early twentieth century, Indians began subjecting their own yogis to biomedical measurements, and testing out the success of yogic cures by biomedical criteria (Alter 2004). This trend accelerated, with Western medical practitioners publishing on thousands of controlled trials in biomedical medical journals for conditions such as back pain, high blood pressure, diabetes and stress over the twentieth century. A recent systematic review of the literature identified over 3,000 studies evaluating the efficacy of a yoga-based intervention on health. The authors found that of over 450 studies they closely

examined (228 of them having been done in India and 124 in the United States) there was a huge lack of standardization of what exactly a ‘yogic intervention’ entailed and also found the generally poor-quality standards of randomized control trials as a major obstacle for this field of research (Elwy et al. 2014). Diverse practices might focus on posture-based stretching and strengthening exercises (asana), specific breathing techniques (pranayama) or meditation-based practices might all be published as a ‘yogic’ intervention for better health and well-being. Despite significant challenges in experimental design in this field, yoga’s potential to transform subjective experiences of pain in chronic conditions as well as anecdotal evidence for effectiveness through word-of-mouth networks contributes to yoga’s continually growing popularity as health and ‘well-being’ interventions in the twenty-first century.

Elements of the biomedical establishment are happy to include yoga as ‘mind-body therapy’ which are very popular as a form of ‘complementary’ medicine (Koch 2015 and Newcombe 2012). Since the 1980s, yoga as therapy in Europe has been slowly more associated with Ayurvedic medicine. Although the majority of yoga practitioners are not very focused in Ayurvedic interventions, Europeans with an interest in Ayurveda are likely to also be familiar with contemporary yoga practices and techniques.

Yoga in 1960s and 70s Counterculture

In August 1967, Indian spirituality – and the idea of yoga – hit European headlines when the popular music band The Beatles attended a public lecture by the Maharishi

Mahesh Yogi in London. The very next day, The Beatles left on a train with the Maharishi with the intention of attending a 10-day yoga retreat in Wales. Due to new forms of mass communications, The Beatles were possibly the most popular music group yet in existence and anything they did was followed by mainstream media globally. The band's increasingly countercultural explorations mirrored changes in European society that had been occurring at less visible levels for many years and brought them to wider audiences.

The interests and activities countercultural activities of the 1960s were foreshadowed and anticipated by esotericists of the 1920s and 30s, and the Beat poets of the 50s. Like the countercultural youth of the late 60s, these earlier groups travelled around India (and Africa) and explored the use of psychedelic substances, in search of spiritual insights and experiences. However, in the 1960s large numbers of young people across Europe and the Americas were challenging traditional authority figures and exploring alternative visions of their own futures. The relative wealth of European welfare states gave a section of the youth an opportunity to explore different ways of being, without immediately needing to earn a living for survival.

For many of those involved in these exploratory sub-cultures, yoga was very much part of their experience and identity. In these milieus, during this period doing yoga was a way of saying 'I'm an alternative person.' This yoga initially might have been encountered through drop-in classes which were offered at a variety of cultural 'hubs' exploring alternative ideas and lifestyles. It was a something which people living communally might

do together. Those involved with yoga in this milieu may have explored yoga from books, from the already established yoga practitioners in Europe, as well as from the increasingly visible Indian ‘gurus’ who were able to travel to Europe to popularise their teachings (see chapter on ‘gurus’ in this volume).

An influential London-based commune for which yoga was integral was called Centre House was founded by Christopher Hills in Kensington, London from around 1962. One 1970s guide to alternative London describe the Centre as a ‘twenty-four-hour a day encounter group, using the growth techniques of meditation, creative conflict, spontaneous music, awareness and sensitivity sessions, creative projects, experiments and discussions’ (Saunders 1970). Hills was deeply interested in promoting human welfare with both science and spirituality. Closely associated with Centre House was the yoga teacher Malcom Strutt who wrote several books on yoga through the 1970s. Strutt’s understanding of yoga was primarily influenced by B.K.S. Iyengar and the writings of Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952). Strutt’s book circulated widely in this milieu and his instructions for yoga emphasized a transformation of consciousness and a reliance on the self as a teacher. He diagrams the effects of the various physical postures of yoga on the ‘direction of consciousness’ and describes a variety of beliefs and practices found in the alternative milieu of the time as having an underlying unity and contributing to a general uplift of the individual and social consciousness. Although the Hills moved to the United States in 1973, Centre House continued in London during the 1970s as a hub of alternative exploration.

Other locations of this kind which served to popularise yoga alongside a variety of other 'countercultural activities' were very likely to be found in other European capitals.

Another influential centre for yoga teaching in the alternative milieu was Muz Murray's project of Gandalf's Garden. Gandalf's Garden was an iconic magazine that saw six issues published between 1968-70 which were circulated all over Europe through networks of like-minded youth. By its sixth issue, there were stores selling the magazine in Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Holland, Germany, Norway, Spain and Switzerland and letters testified to a nationwide distribution in Britain. Murray also had a shop-front space of the same name open in central London from 1968-1971. Gandalf's Garden attempted to operate outside of a capitalist structure as much as possible, and the spiritual vision was inclusive rather than exclusive. Many visiting teachers from India were invited to give teachings and walk-in participants were likewise invited to share their insights. An invitation to the Friday evening gathering makes the inclusive and spiritual tone of the gatherings clear:

Soul Gardeners and seekers of the miraculous get together for vibration raising, study, discussion, Chinese tea and soul stimulation. Sessions usually begin with Mantra Meditation (no problem for beginners who can just sit and absorb the vibes) to rarefy the atmosphere. (We have to close the door during this so please be early). Then follows reflections on the Eternal Why of our existence from any angel open to us, initiated by the Gardeners, or by visiting yogis, occultists, healers, mediums, monks, astrologers, writers, researchers or groups, who are well into their own thing, who have offered to come along and act as the catalytic element for discussion. (Prospective catalysts are invited to contact Muz Murray: FLA 6156 or just come along anyway). (Murray 1970: 17)

Murray drew upon connections with the youth culture more generally to help cover costs. For example, he held benefit concerts in which Marc Bolan/Tyrannosaurus Rex and David Bowie were amongst the musicians who helped raise funds for his project.

Although *Gandalf's Garden* itself was drug free, many of those involved with its message, were interested in experimenting with various forms of 'getting high' and opening their mind to the possibilities of human experience and its possible meanings. In the experimental 'scene' of the 1960s, explorations in consciousness between techniques of yoga, meditation and drugs were very much linked in some populations. The Beatles and other popular musicians were well known to experiment with drugs as well as eastern spiritualities, as well as a number of figures from previous generations such as Aldus Huxley, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Timothy Leary and 'anti-psychiatrist' R.D. Laing. The Indian guru Yogi Bhañan (1929– 2004) was explicitly attempting to appeal to those looking for a natural 'high' after having had experiences on drugs with the technique of 'Kundalini Yoga' and his Happy Healthy Holy Order (3HO). Yogi Bhañan (born Harbhajan Singh Puri) combined Sikh doctrine with physical yoga techniques learned from the Delhi-based yoga teacher Dhirendra Brahmachari (1924–1994); he introduced his programme in California from 1969 and it came to Europe very soon thereafter in the early 1970s (Deslippe 2012).

Through The Beatles and other celebrities, India became associated with a new, more psychedelic Orientalist vision of salvation. Cultural icons and a host of minor

celebrities found hope in Indian spirituality and many were interested in following their example. Yoga, as something related to Indian spirituality, became associated in this popular search. As the activities of these personalities attracted national and international media attention, a type of yoga more focused on physical practices and transformations of consciousness became familiar.

Neo-Liberal Yoga

By the mid-1970s, the economic climate and transitory nature of the countercultural milieus were changing. Many of those who had committed yoga practices, or associations with particular Indian gurus continued their practices. But throughout Europe market values and market-oriented yoga slowly began to become more dominant, particularly in metropolitan centres. Ever flexible, practices called yoga adapted into the neoliberally-flavoured private market place.

For a period in the 1980s yoga appeared to decline in popularity, physical yoga was in competition with aerobics and private gyms, and the some of the various yoga-oriented new-religious movements suffered leadership crises and negative anti-cult publicity. However, by the mid-1990s, new forms of yoga emerged that were able to thrive in the more neo-liberal environment. Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga as taught by Pattabhi Jois eventually gained traction in Europe in the 1990s. Pattabhi Jois was first mentioned as a yoga teacher by the Belgian yoga enthusiast André van Lysebeth found Jois' Mysore classes in the 1960s; Van Lysebeth mentioned the 'Astanga Yoga Nilayam de Mysore' in his

J'apprends le Yoga (1968) along with the ashram of Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh, Vishwayatan Yogashram in Delhi, the teachings of Dharendra Bramachari and the Kaivalayadhama Samhiti of Lonvala as places where he studied yoga during five years in India. British pop-musician Sting who began learning Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga from the peripatetic American teacher Danny Paradise around 1990. In 1993, a feature article in *Esquire* magazine increased attention to Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga system globally (Stanton 1993).

In Britain the Brighton-born Derek Ireland (1949–1988) was another important, charismatic populariser of Jois' teachings. Ireland came to yoga after a background in sports and music; he promoted punk bands on the south coast of Britain in the mid-1970s. At the end of his rock-and-roll career, Ireland and his partner Radha Warrell travelled to India, first studying Sivananda yoga, then being introduced to Jois' sequences. After studying with Jois in Mysore during the early 1980s, Ireland and Warrell taught the sequences in New York City's central park as well as in Europe. Before founding his own centre, Ireland taught yoga at the Skyros Centre on the Greek island, a counter-cultural centre founded by British people interested in personal development and the human potential movement in 1979 (Guttridge 1998). The intensity of the practice, based on a flowing sequence of sun-salutations intertwined with other asanas, suited the lifestyle of those who were more affluent and career-focused in sedentary employment. The community of practitioners inspired by Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga committed to an intense

physical practice, usually done first thing in the morning. But these practitioners were also very interested in psychological transformations, personal ethics and in reading and developing the spiritual aspects of their understanding of yoga (Berger 2006 and Smith 2007).

From the mid-1990s the model of a model of multiple styles of class in a 'yoga studio' premises began to be introduced and has proved highly successful in European (and global) metropolitan centres. The one of the first attempts at this model was the Life Centre in Notting Hill, London which opened its doors in 1993. However, it was difficult to make it financially viable; it only really turned a profit after a change of ownership in the early twenty-first century. To some extent many yoga teachers have always been entrepreneurs. However, from the mid-1990s onwards 'brands' and 'styles' of yoga began to vie for market shares, particularly in the new venues of yoga studios where you could try everything on offer. The inauguration of the exhibition hall "Yoga Show" as an annual event in London from 2005 onwards – a fair of yoga styles, products and teachers – exemplifies this trend. However many of the most successful 'brands' of yoga had connections to earlier models of propagating yoga teaching, either through a continuity of student-teacher exchanges or through the adult education context.

Commentators on the function of yoga in early twenty-first century have often been critical, seeing a transformation from yoga's 'radical roots' to a practice which helps contemporary people cope with the stress and uncertainty of post-industrial economics

(Schnäbele 2010). As such, some have argued that yoga in neo-liberal contexts has lost touch with its countercultural and transformational history and merely serves to prop-up an iniquitous social system (Carrette and King 2005). However, many practitioners of contemporary commercialized yoga are also genuinely undertaking personal spiritual quests and transforming their understanding of consciousness.

Take Back Yoga?

More recently more non-resident Indians have been developing a visible Indian sub-culture of yoga practice in Europe. Some of the third and fourth generations Indians in Europe can be found attending and teaching yoga in the commercial and lineage-based yoga centres found in many European cities. However, millions more follow the yoga teachings of Swami Ramdev, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Prem Rawat and other Indian personalities on Aastha TV and other satellite channels broadcasting religious programming in Indian languages; these are becoming significant practices amongst European diasporic populations. Ramdev has been described as India's 'most popular tele-healer' and is often described as a 'household name' by the Indian press. Ramdev-style yoga classes are now being taught in community centres to the Indian diasporic community. At a recent visit of Swami Ramdev to London in the summer of 2018, several hundred members of the Indian diaspora attended all-day yoga sessions with the famous television personality. Ramdev has concentrated on practical teachings aimed at achieving better health and well-being through traditional Indian heritage. His lessons are broadcast daily

(usually at 5.30am) on Hindi cable television and usually include patriotic or devotional songs. Although Ramdev has been criticised for his multi-billion rupee branded empire, many of his yoga classes are offered very cheaply or free of charge by ‘Assistant Yog Teachers’ at community halls and other affordable venues in areas where there are large Indian diasporic populations.

Ramdev recommends short sequences of simplified breathing exercises (*prāṇāyām*), hand positions (*mudras*) and exercises (*āsana*) that are accessible for even the elderly and infirm (Bālakṛiṣṇa 2015). A full practice of the *prāṇāyām* exercises could take more than an hour a day, but it is possible to do exercises in considerably less time depending on individual requirements and available time (Ramdev 2009). Supporters of Ramdev’s method emphasize the method’s simplicity, efficiency and effectiveness in making practical improvements in health and wellbeing.

In recent years there has also been a limited push back from the organised Hindu community opposing the commercialisation of yoga and its possible regulation as a sport. In the spirit of Vivekananda, such groups are generally welcoming of non-Indian spiritual seekers. However, there has been a vocal minority voice of non-resident Indians decrying a continued neoliberal colonial exploitation of yoga by Europeans who are not sensitive to the religious and cultural heritage in which yoga is rooted.

Conclusions – Regional Variations and a Diversity of Practices

In conclusion I would like to emphasise the multivalent associations of yoga in Europe. Yoga in Europe ranges from the Romantic ideals of Sanskrit literature to the scandals of Crowley-inspired sex-magic to mundane scenes of middle-class women doing yoga as keep-fit. Aspects of all of these threads can still be found as yoga throughout Europe today. In telling a normative arch of general trends, I've also missed out a lot of local and regional colour. Yoga is not and never will be a single thing or belong to any one group of people or practices.

As yoga in Europe enters the twenty-first century there has been a marked interest in scholarly self-reflection by practitioners. Increasingly practitioners are exploring in historical and social context exactly they are practicing and how it might relate to the history and culture of India. The academic study of yoga has become established in various niches of the university structures including the disciplines of religious studies. Millions of Europeans have now tried practicing some form of yoga. Most European yoga practitioners are a-political in their relationship with yoga. In contrast, for many non-resident Indians, yoga has profound national and political implications. Tensions between yoga as a tool to promote Indian nationalism, yoga as a medicalised healing practice and yoga as a technique for personal spiritual growth will continue to shape understandings of yoga in Europe throughout this century.

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